FIRST COMICS®
JUNE $1.25
NO. 24
$1.60 CANADA

E-MAN™

MAUSER'S STORY

featuring the return of NICK CUTI!

© 1985 FIRST COMICS, INC.

c/o FIRST COMICS,
1014 DAVIS STREET,
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS
60201

This issue re-unites **E-Man** *co-creators* **Nicola Cuti** *and* **Joe Staton** *to tell the origin story of the little detective with the big gun — Mike (don't call him Mickey) Mauser. It's been a long time since Nick wrote an* **E-Man** *story — ten years, in fact — so he had plenty of time to think about it and tell the story exactly the way he felt it should be told.*

I think it shows, and I hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed producing it.

Now on to your letters on issues #21 and #22:

Dear Joe:

It was a slow day at the comics shop that prompted me to pick up issue #21 of E-Man. After reading your lampooning of the A-Team, I believe you've got me hooked!

You caught the essential silliness of the television program. I mean it kind of strains the limits of one's credulity when four guys fire fifty thousand rounds of ammunition per show and never kill anyone, or cars blow up and flip over (isn't it amazing how they all flip over in exactly the same way), and the occupants crawl out without a scratch. And unbelievers call comics immature!

Brian Cobb
309 W. 7th
North Little Rock, AR

I have this great idea for a made-for-television movie in which terrorists detonate a nuclear device in the middle of a major metropolitan area: Cars explode, skyscrapers melt, houses are smashed to toothpick-size rubble . . . and everybody crawls from the radioactive rubble completely unscathed.

Dear Joe, Rick, Mike, et al.:

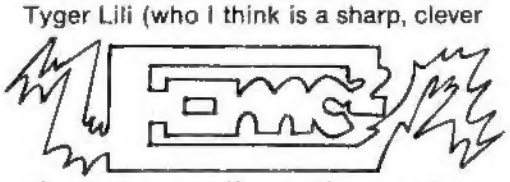
Issue #22 was good, but I still don't much like super-powered funny animals (sorry Teddy and Roy Thomas). But in this case, I think I'll make an exception. I mean, while I think it's dumb to have talking animals live by themselves on another Earth, having an intelligent animal side-kick for E-Man is a different story. Unfortunately, you only gave Teddy powers for one issue, instead of permanently or even just another few issues. Just think what it would be like if Teddy and Nova still had their powers. Why then, a super-team could be born that's not really a super-team. Heck, why not consider it, I mean you got nothing to lose by trying and everything to gain, including sales.

Mark S. Mellor
12970 W. Montana Dr.
Lakewood, CO 80228

The managing editor responds: "Roy Thomas is a super-powered funny animal?"

Dear Mike and Joe:

I have always felt kind of indifferent about Teddy Q and really wasn't looking forward to reading issue #22. I was surprised how much I did enjoy the book. Perhaps what made the story work for me was the many guest stars: Kid Kanga (whose origin was hysterical), Boomer (the sidekick — literally), Marsupial Mama (and her Tasmanian Devillettes), Tyger Lili (who I think is a sharp, clever



character, well worth a return appearance), and lastly Big Al (a top-notch E-Man villain). Unfortunately, I still feel indifferent about Teddy Q (alias Captain Koala).

Adam Burchess
1004A Westover Dr.
Greenville, NC 27834

Dear Subscription Department:

I received a notice with E-Man #22 that I only had one issue left on my subscription. Since I don't wish to miss out on any issue of this fine comic book, my check is enclosed. However, I do have questions. The form refers to a one year subscription being 12 issues for $15.00 but the indicia for E-Man says that it is now being published bi-monthly (i.e. 6 issues a year) for $7.50 a year. My check is for $15.00 so that I will get 12 issues which looks like it means 2 years. Please don't work so hard at confusing your loyal readers.

Terry Hughes
6205 Wilson Blvd.
Falls Church, VA 22044

Sorry about the mix-up Terry. With very few exceptions (such as limited series), we offer subscriptions in multiples of 12 issues — that covers a year for monthly books, two years for bi-monthly books, and something in between for the few books that switch from monthly to bi-monthly (or vice versa) in the middle of a subscription period.

In other words, your subscription is for a specific number of issues, not a period of time. So you're right: your $15 entitles you to 12 issues.

NEXT ISSUE: E-Man decides the superhero game is too much for him to handle and flees to a remote South Seas island, only to find that he must contend with "Whom the Gods Would Destroy," brought to you by **Nicola Cuti, Joe Staton,** and **Rick Burchett.**

— Rick Oliver

Rick Obadiah, Publisher

Mike Gold, Managing Editor
Rick Oliver, Editorial Coordinator
Alex Wald,
Production Manager

Ralph C. Musicant,
Operations Director
Kathy Kotsivas,
Direct Sales Manager

E-MAN™, Vol. 1, No. 24, June 1985. Published by FIRST COMICS, INC., Mike Gold, President; Rick Obadiah, Secretary; Kenneth F. Levin and Ralph C. Musicant, Directors. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 1014 Davis Street, Evanston, IL 60201. Published bi-monthly. Copyright © 1985 First Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. Price: $1.25 in the U.S. Subscription rates for twelve issues: $15.00 in the U.S., $17.00 in Canada, and $32.00 foreign rate. All payments must be in U.S. funds. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this publication are entirely fictional. In fact, so am I — which means you're not really reading this. No actual persons, living or dead, without satiric content are intended or should be inferred. E-Man, Alec Tronn, Nova Kane, Michael Mauser, Teddy Q., and all prominent characters featured in this issue are trademarks of First Comics, Inc. Printed in the U.S.A.

E-Man (ISSN-0746-6560) is published bi-monthly for $7.50 per year by First Comics Inc., 1014 Davis Street, Evanston, IL 60201. Second class postage paid at Evanston, IL. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to E-Man, c/o First Comics, Inc., 1014 Davis St., Evanston, IL 60201.

A FIRST COMICS PUBLISHING PRODUCTION

E-MAN™

NICOLA CUTI-WRITER/CO-CREATORS/PENCILLER-**JOE STATON**
RICK BURCHETT-INKER – **KEN BRUZENAK**-LETTERER
WENDY FIORE-COLORIST – **MIKE GOLD**-EDITOR

MY NAME IS MAUSER. THAT'S ALSO THE NAME OF MY PISTOL. IN MY PROFESSION, IT'S THE ONLY RELIABLE FRIEND THAT I HAVE. I TAKE CARE OF IT, AND IT TAKES CARE OF ME. I'M A PRIVATE EYE. AND THIS IS MY STORY.

THE BILGE RAT

OUR FISH DON'T SMELL!

mauser's story

I NEVER ATE AT "THE BILGE RAT," BUT I WAS TOLD THEY SERVED THE LOUSIEST CHOW IN THE CITY. AFTER A COUPLE OF GUYS COUGHED-UP THEIR GUTS FROM *FOOD POISONING*, THEY CLOSED THE JOINT. NOW THE ONLY THING A SLOB CAN DIE FROM IN THERE IS-

-LEAD POISONING!

KA-POW!
KA-POW!
KA-POW!

I...COUGH, COUGH... FINALLY BOUGHT THE FARM...COUGH...GOT ENOUGH...COUGH... *LEAD* IN ME TO CAST THE *MALTESE FALCON*.*

* A NOVEL BY DASHIELL HAMMETT. READ THE BOOK OR SEE THE MOVIE. BOTH ARE AMONG THE FINEST OF THEIR GENRE.-MIKE.

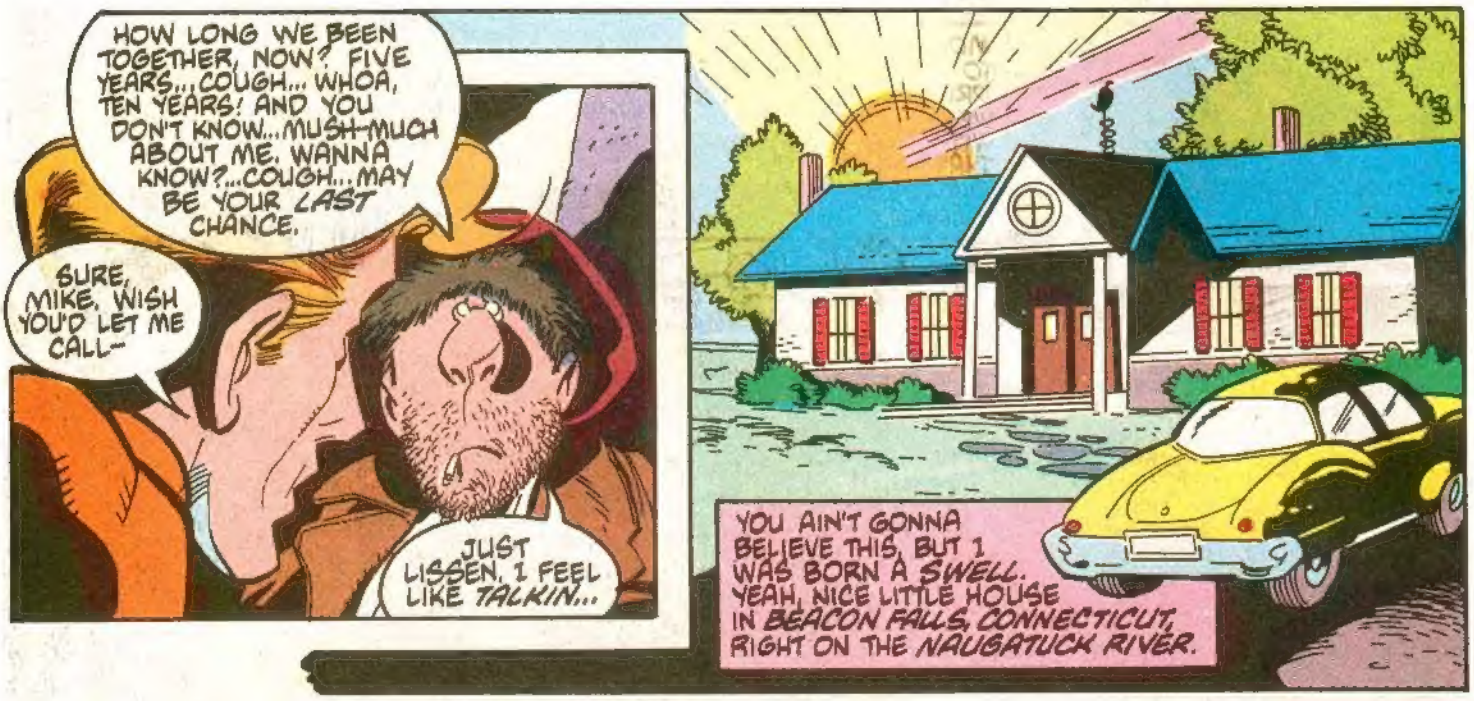
HEY! I WAS JUST TRYIN' TA BE *DRAMATIC*. I *DIDN'T* MEAN THAT!

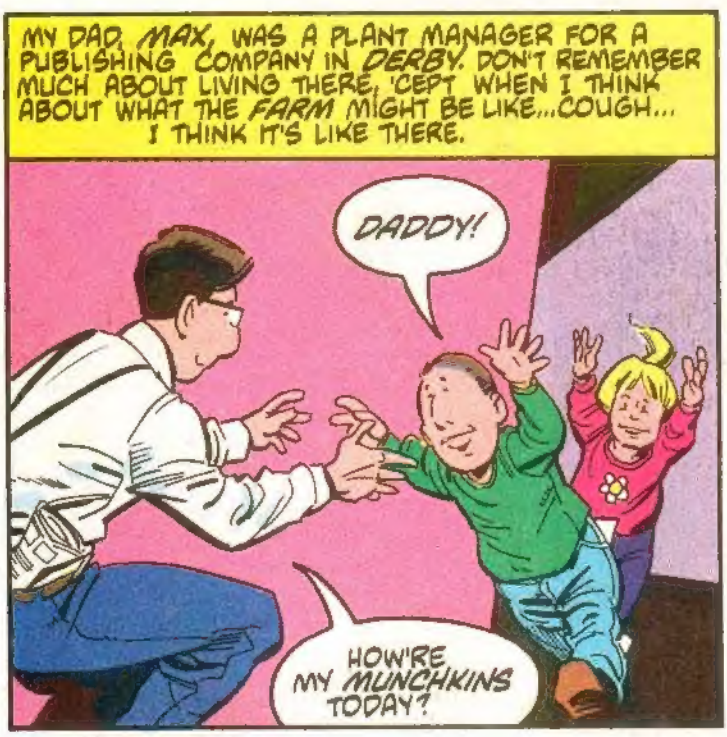
SHUDDA KNOWN...

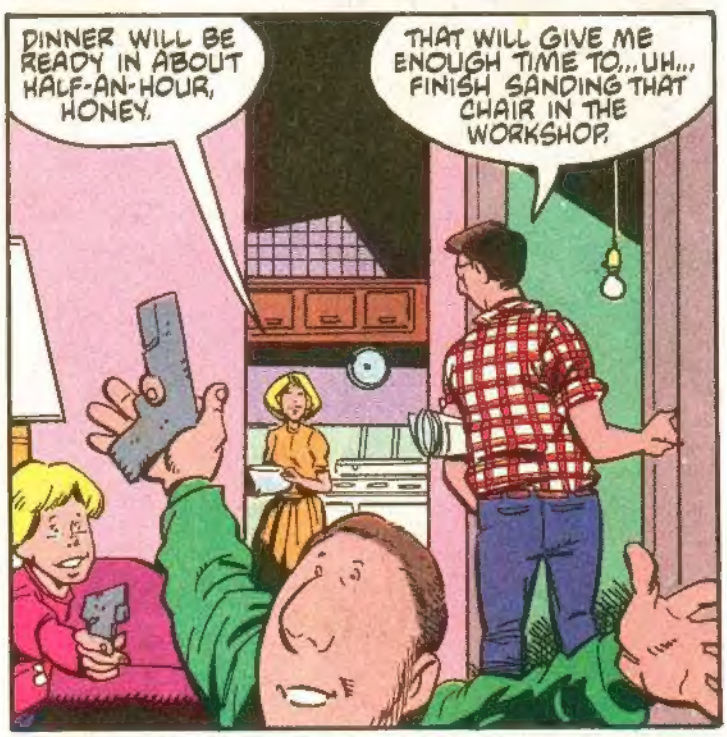
SORRY ABOUT THE RAZZLE-DAZZLE, BUT IT WAS THE BEST DISGUISE I COULD THINK OF ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE.

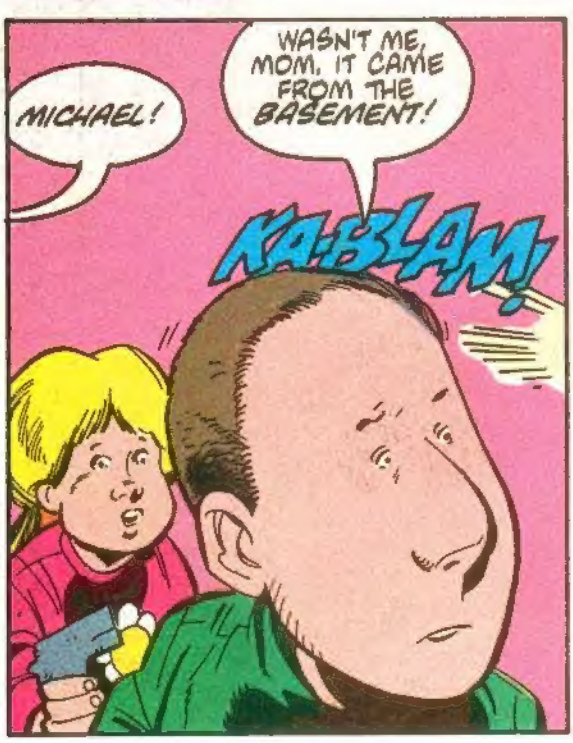
YOU OKAY? YOU LOOK...*SHOT*. SHOULD I GET AN AMBULANCE.

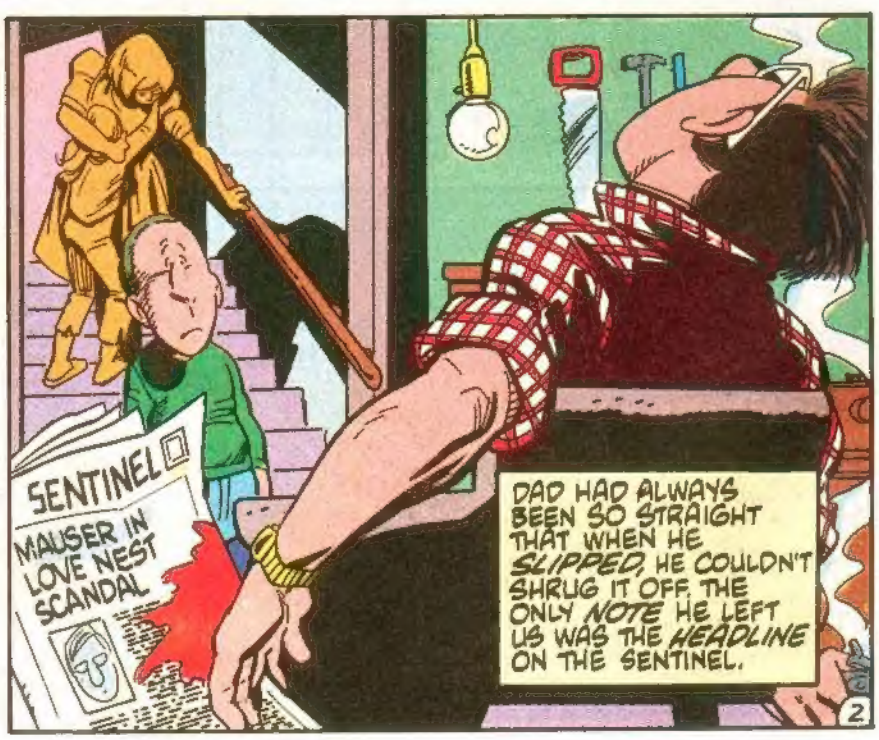
NAW. LET'S JUST REST HERE A WHILE--TILL I CATCH MY *BREATH*.

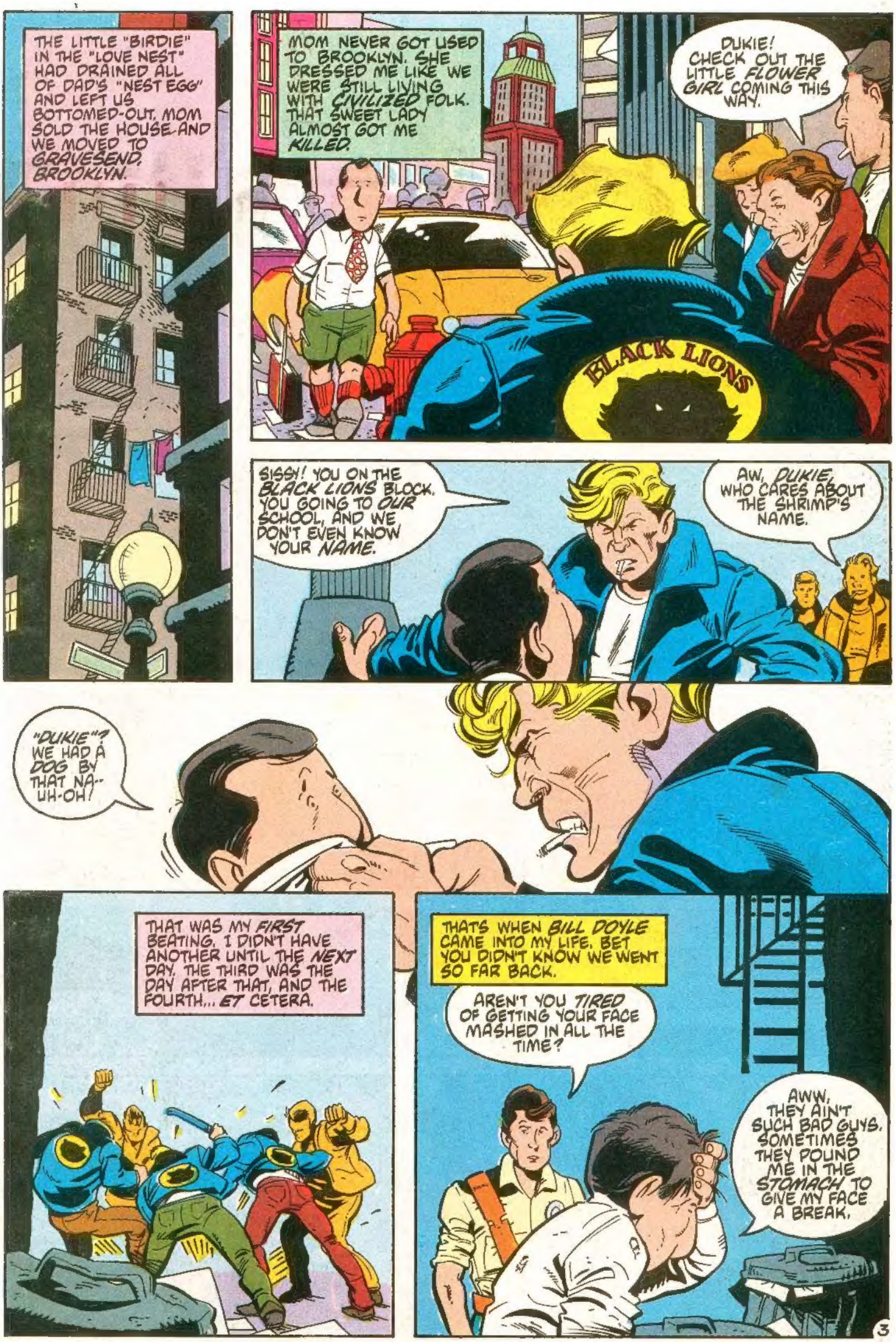

HOW LONG WE BEEN TOGETHER, NOW? FIVE YEARS...COUGH... WHOA, TEN YEARS! AND YOU DON'T KNOW...MUSH-MUCH ABOUT ME. WANNA KNOW?...COUGH...MAY BE YOUR LAST CHANCE.
SURE, MIKE, WISH YOU'D LET ME CALL—
JUST LISSEN, I FEEL LIKE TALKIN...
YOU AIN'T GONNA BELIEVE THIS, BUT I WAS BORN A SWELL. YEAH, NICE LITTLE HOUSE IN BEACON FALLS, CONNECTICUT, RIGHT ON THE NAUGATUCK RIVER.

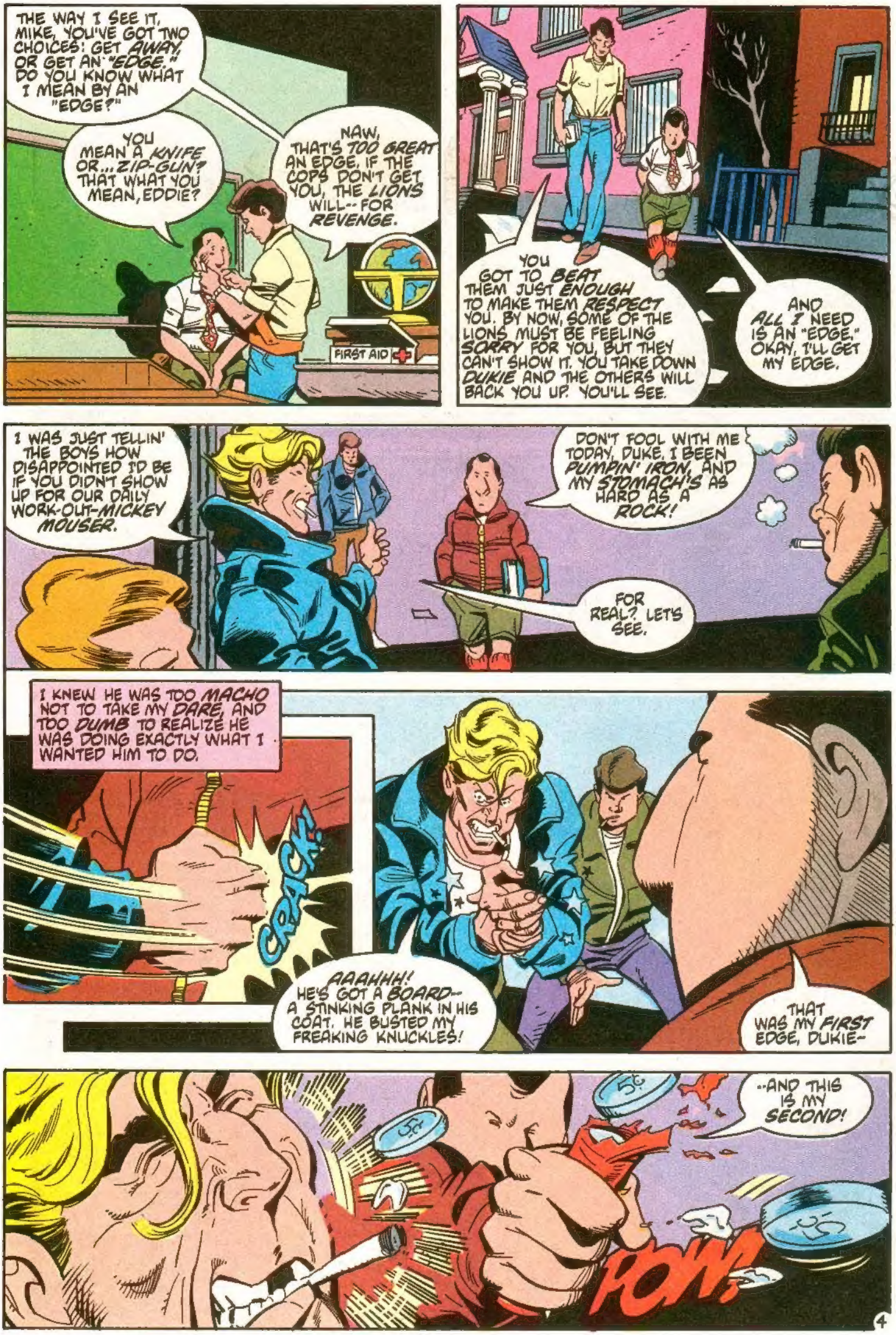

MY DAD, MAX, WAS A PLANT MANAGER FOR A PUBLISHING COMPANY IN DERBY. DON'T REMEMBER MUCH ABOUT LIVING THERE, 'CEPT WHEN I THINK ABOUT WHAT THE FARM MIGHT BE LIKE...COUGH... I THINK IT'S LIKE THERE.
DADDY!
HOW'RE MY MUNCHKINS TODAY?


DINNER WILL BE READY IN ABOUT HALF-AN-HOUR, HONEY.
THAT WILL GIVE ME ENOUGH TIME TO...UH... FINISH SANDING THAT CHAIR IN THE WORKSHOP.


MICHAEL!
WASN'T ME, MOM. IT CAME FROM THE BASEMENT!
KA-BLAM!


SENTINEL
MAUSER IN LOVE NEST SCANDAL
DAD HAD ALWAYS BEEN SO STRAIGHT THAT WHEN HE SLIPPED, HE COULDN'T SHRUG IT OFF. THE ONLY NOTE HE LEFT US WAS THE HEADLINE ON THE SENTINEL.


THE LITTLE "BIRDIE" IN THE "LOVE NEST" HAD DRAINED ALL OF DAD'S "NEST EGG" AND LEFT US BOTTOMED-OUT. MOM SOLD THE HOUSE AND WE MOVED TO GRAVESEND, BROOKLYN.
MOM NEVER GOT USED TO BROOKLYN. SHE DRESSED ME LIKE WE WERE STILL LIVING WITH CIVILIZED FOLK. THAT SWEET LADY ALMOST GOT ME KILLED.
DUKIE! CHECK OUT THE LITTLE FLOWER GIRL COMING THIS WAY.
BLACK LIONS
SISSY! YOU ON THE BLACK LIONS BLOCK. YOU GOING TO OUR SCHOOL, AND WE DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR NAME.
AW, DUKIE, WHO CARES ABOUT THE SHRIMP'S NAME.
"DUKIE"? WE HAD A DOG BY THAT NA-- UH-OH!
THAT WAS MY FIRST BEATING. I DIDN'T HAVE ANOTHER UNTIL THE NEXT DAY. THE THIRD WAS THE DAY AFTER THAT, AND THE FOURTH... ET CETERA.
THATS WHEN BILL DOYLE CAME INTO MY LIFE. BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW WE WENT SO FAR BACK.
AREN'T YOU TIRED OF GETTING YOUR FACE MASHED IN ALL THE TIME?
AWW, THEY AIN'T SUCH BAD GUYS. SOMETIMES THEY POUND ME IN THE STOMACH TO GIVE MY FACE A BREAK.
3


THE WAY I SEE IT, MIKE, YOU'VE GOT TWO CHOICES: GET AWAY, OR GET AN "EDGE." DO YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN BY AN "EDGE?"
YOU MEAN A KNIFE OR... ZIP-GUN? THAT WHAT YOU MEAN, EDDIE?
NAW, THAT'S TOO GREAT AN EDGE, IF THE COPS DON'T GET YOU, THE LIONS WILL-- FOR REVENGE.
FIRST AID
YOU GOT TO BEAT THEM JUST ENOUGH TO MAKE THEM RESPECT YOU. BY NOW, SOME OF THE LIONS MUST BE FEELING SORRY FOR YOU, BUT THEY CAN'T SHOW IT. YOU TAKE DOWN DUKIE AND THE OTHERS WILL BACK YOU UP. YOU'LL SEE.
AND ALL I NEED IS AN "EDGE," OKAY, I'LL GET MY EDGE.
I WAS JUST TELLIN' THE BOYS HOW DISAPPOINTED I'D BE IF YOU DIDN'T SHOW UP FOR OUR DAILY WORK-OUT-MICKEY MOUSER.
DON'T FOOL WITH ME TODAY, DUKE. I BEEN PUMPIN' IRON, AND MY STOMACH'S AS HARD AS A ROCK!
FOR REAL? LET'S SEE.
I KNEW HE WAS TOO MACHO NOT TO TAKE MY DARE, AND TOO DUMB TO REALIZE HE WAS DOING EXACTLY WHAT I WANTED HIM TO DO.
CRACK!
AAAHHH! HE'S GOT A BOARD-- A STINKING PLANK IN HIS COAT. HE BUSTED MY FREAKING KNUCKLES!
THAT WAS MY FIRST EDGE, DUKIE-
--AND THIS IS MY SECOND!
POW!
4

HE AIN'T CROAKED, BUT HE'S OUT COLD!
HE WAS OUR HONCHO, MAUSER. DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS?
ACCORDING TO CLUB RULES, YOU ARE OUR NEW LEADER.
UH... THANKS, GUYS, BUT HIS COLORS WON'T FIT ME. STILL, I'D LIKE TO ...JOIN.
BLACK
THAT PROVED TO BE A WISE MOVE. INSTEAD OF MAKING A BITTER ENEMY OUT OF DUKIE, HE MADE ME HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND.
I'M GOING OUT WITH THE GUYS AFTER I EAT. DON'T WAIT UP FOR ME.
YOU GOT A BIG TEST TOMORROW, YOU SAID. WHY ARE YOU WASTING YOUR TIME WITH THOSE HOODS WHEN YOU SHOULD BE STUDYING?
CORN FLAKES
QUIT NAGGING ME, MOM.
LIONS
NAGGING, HUH? I'LL STOP NAGGING YOU WHEN YOU TELL WHERE YOU FIND ALL THAT MONEY YOU BRING HOME. THEN I'LL QUIT.
WE COULD HEAR YOUR OLD LADY HOWLING FROM HERE.
LET'S GO PUNCH OUT SOME HIPPIES. I FEEL LIKE A KNOTTED ROPE.

GAS
.28? GAL.
I GOT A BETTER IDEA. WE HIT OLD MAN FRENCH'S PLACE TONIGHT.
CANDY STORES ARE ONE THING, BUT I DON'T KNOW ABOUT... AH, WHY NOT?
I TELL YA, I CHECKED THE PLACE ALREADY. THERE AIN'T NO ALARMS. JUST WORRY ABOUT THE LOCKS.
GOT IT.
.28? GAL.
NEITHER DUKIE NOR THE REST OF US FIGURED ON FRENCH'S EDGE.
YAAAAA
GRRRR
THE COPS, MIKIE! THE COPS!
RED, HELP ME WITH THE DOG!
THEY HAULED US INTO NIGHT COURT AND GAVE US EACH A CHOICE. SOME CHOICE.
I'M SICK OF THE WAY YOU YOUNG PUNKS TERRORIZE THESE STREETS. YOU'VE MADE A MESS OUT OF YOUR COUNTRY, BUT I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT.
FOUR YEARS IN PRISON... OR FOUR YEARS IN THE SERVICE!
SO THAT'S HOW I GOT VOLUNTEERED FOR THE ARMY. GUESS WHAT OUTFIT THEY STICK ME IN--THE BLACK LIONS OF VIETNAM.

FIRST NOTES

A BUSY MONTH...

It's pretty cold and snowy in most of America this month, and to help warm us all up a bit, we're taking the atypical step (well, for First Comics at least) of releasing two — count 'em two — special projects.

THE RETURN OF ELRIC

It is with great pride and considerable enthusiasm that we announce Elric's return to the comics pages, now under the First Comics' banner.

Previously published by Marvel and Pacific, we are continuing to feature the works of the two most experienced comics professionals with regard to bringing **Michael Moorcock's** classic anti-hero to the four-color page.

Roy Thomas started the whole thing back in the early 1970s with, of all things, a crossover appearance in *Conan The Barbarian*. **Mike Friedrich,** under the auspices of his *Star*Reach* organization, has acted as editor of the Elric comics saga for more than a decade. Both men are back in their respective capacities.

Michael T. Gilbert, who worked on Pacific's adaptation of *Elric of Melnibone*, is also back, laying out the story for finisher/colorist **George Freeman.**

We're approaching each Elric novel as a separate mini-series, which will allow us all some important flexibilities: If necessary, we can take a break between adaptations in order to let the creators catch their breath.

More importantly, if we so desire we can shift over to a different — related — Moorcock sword and sorcery series (Corum, Hawkmoon, Erekose) without being obligated to move on to the next Elric story.

We're starting with *The Sailor on the Seas of Fate*, the successor novel to *Elric of Melnibone* — which, coincidentally, features Corum, Hawkmoon, and Erekose.

Elric long has been a personal favorite, and, judging from Marvel and Pacific's sales, the albino prince is a big favorite of comics enthusiasts all over the continent. We're glad to have him back.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

Comics fans (not to mention Monty Python fans) have been hearing that phrase for years now. Occasionally, the new project lived up to its advance billing — more often, the hype was merely the harbinger for yet another teenage mutant superteam book, or for whatever happened to be in vogue that decade.

Well, we can honestly tell you there never has been a comic book like **Shatter.** There has never been a comic drawn entirely on a computer — in this case, an Apple Macintosh — taking full advantage of the amazing special effects capabilities of the medium.

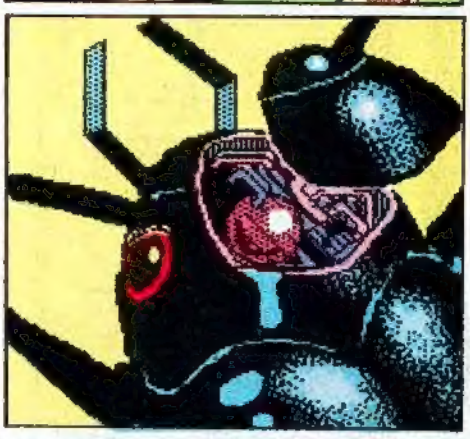
"Special effects" is a good way to look at it. Comparing the technique used on **Shatter** to those used on traditional comics is like comparing special effects scenes from "The Day The Earth Stood Still" to "Star Wars."

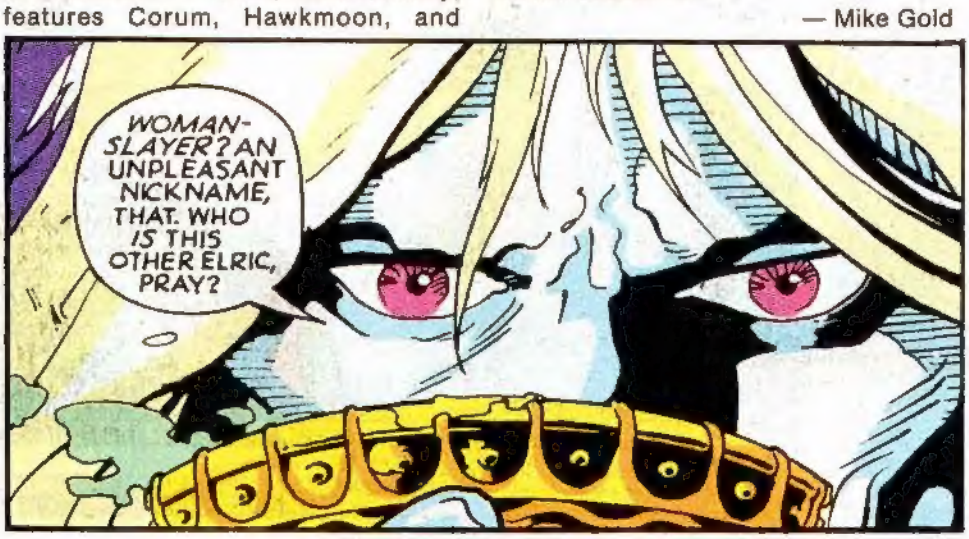
Shatter is the creation of artist **Michael Saenz,** best known for his astonishing airbrush stories in *Epic Illustrated,* and writer **Peter B. Gillis,** whose work has been long known by comics readers.

Shatter premieres in two places at the same time: A full-length Baxter-format deluxe one-shot, and as an eight page back-up in **Jon Sable, Freelance** (the back-up series will help **Mike Grell** buy sufficient time to write and draw this summer's **Batman/Jon Sable** crossover; we presume **Shatter** will spin-off into his own title after that point in time). Different stories, I should point out.

Comics really will never be the same. Check **Shatter** out.

— Mike Gold





FIRST IN FEBRUARY

American Flagg! #21: Part three of **Howard Chaykin's** election story "Bullets and Ballots," and the beginning of a bizarre multi-character series (starting off with Mark Thrust) by **Alan Moore** and **Larry Stroman!**

Elric: The Sailor on the Seas of Fate #1 (mini-series): Elric, Corum, Hawkmoon, and Erekose ... and **Roy Thomas, Michael T. Gilbert** and **George Freeman!**

E-Man #24: From the streets of Brooklyn to the jungles of Vietnam to the alleys of Chicago, writer/co-creator **Nick Cuti** returns to reveal Michael Mauser's secret origin in "Mauser's Story."

Grimjack #11: The Lawkillers take on Grimjack in the temporal actioner "Hammer and Anvil," and Ms. Tree (!?!) guest-stars in ... Munden's Bar?

Jon Sable, Freelance #25: "Homecoming," the start of **Mike Grell's** look into Jon Sable's past! And, the first in our ongoing, precedent-breaking series, **Shatter!**

Nexus #9: Can Nexus return to Earth to put an end to Teen Angel? **Mike Baron, Steve Rude** and **Eric Shanower** will let you in on the secret — this month!

Shatter (Deluxe Preview): **Michael Saenz** and **Peter B. Gillis'** booklength premiere of the world's first comic book drawn on computer! A true first — from First!

Starslayer #29: Tamara finally catches up with her past as Torin begins to unravel the secret of the Black Torc, while the Black Flame begins his push against the Nightmare World!

AND TO ADD INSULT TO INJURY, THEY MADE ME A DOG HANDLER.
US ARMY
MY FIRST BASE WAS LAI KHE, JUST OFF HIGHWAY 13.
GOT YOUR LOAD OF DOGS, CAPTAIN, AND A TWINK* HANDLER FOR GOOD MEASURE.
THANKS, SERGEANT. YOU CAN CHOW DOWN FOR AN HOUR.
MAUSER
*NEW RECRUIT. ALSO CALLED AN FNG, OR "FREAKING NEW GUY"--MIKE.
PVT. MAUSER, MICHAEL REPORT-- I KNOW YOU. MY GOD! YOU'RE... BILL DOYLE.
AND I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU, MAUSER--ABOUT YOUR GANG, ABOUT FRENCH'S GAS STATION, BUT HERE WE START WITH CLEAN SLATES. YOU DO YOUR JOB AND I'LL FORGET WHAT A ROTTEN SLIME YOU TURNED INTO.
EDDIE, SHOW MAUSER WHERE THE CHOW HOOCH* IS.
YES, CAPTAIN.
US
*TIN-ROOFED, SEMI-PERMANENT BUILDING--MIKE.
YOU A SOUTH VIETNAMESE REGULAR?
I CHIEU HOI!* A SCOUT FOR YOU SIDE. I USED TO BE NVA**, I NOW A-1 G.I. PATHFINDER.
HEY, YOU WANT BUY REAL NICE NVA PISTOL? TOP GRADE. I COME TO YOU HOOCH TONIGHT. MAKE YOU GOOD BARGAIN.
*LITERALLY "OPEN ARMS." IT MEANS TO ACCEPT THOSE WHO WISHED TO SWITCH SIDES AND FIGHT WITH THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE AGAINST THE COMMUNIST NORTH.
**NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY (COMMUNIST)--MIKE.

IN 'NAM I NEEDED AN EDGE LIKE NEVER BEFORE, BUT I SURE DIDN'T SUSPECT IT WAS GOING TO BE WITH ME FOR LIFE!
THIRTY AMERICAN DOLLARS. YOU GOT TO TAKE. IT HAS SAME NAME AS YOU. LOOK AT HIGH-GRADE WOODEN HANDLES.
TWINK! YOU GOING TO PUT YOUR THIRTY IN THIS GAME OR ARE YOU GOING TO BUY THE POP-GUN?
THE CAPTAIN SAYS WE'RE MOVING OUT TOMORROW. WHEN WE DO, I'D RATHER HAVE THIS UNDER MY BELT.
HERE'S YOUR MONEY. DO-WHATEVER YOU DO WITH IT.
FOR FAMILY. SOMEDAY I SHOW YOU.
EARLY THE NEXT MORNING WE MOVED OUT TO FIRE BASE: SAND CASTLE, NEAR THE CAMBODIAN BORDER. RUMOR WAS THAT THE NVA'S WERE MOVING TROOPS IN THROUGH THERE.
BY 1330 HOURS WE HAD REACHED THE BASE.
MAUSER! WELCOME TO HELL!
DUKIE!
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, RUNT!
THOSE MONKEYS HAVEN'T GOT A CHANCE NOW WITH US A TEAM AGAIN.
ANY OF THE OTHER GUYS AROUND?

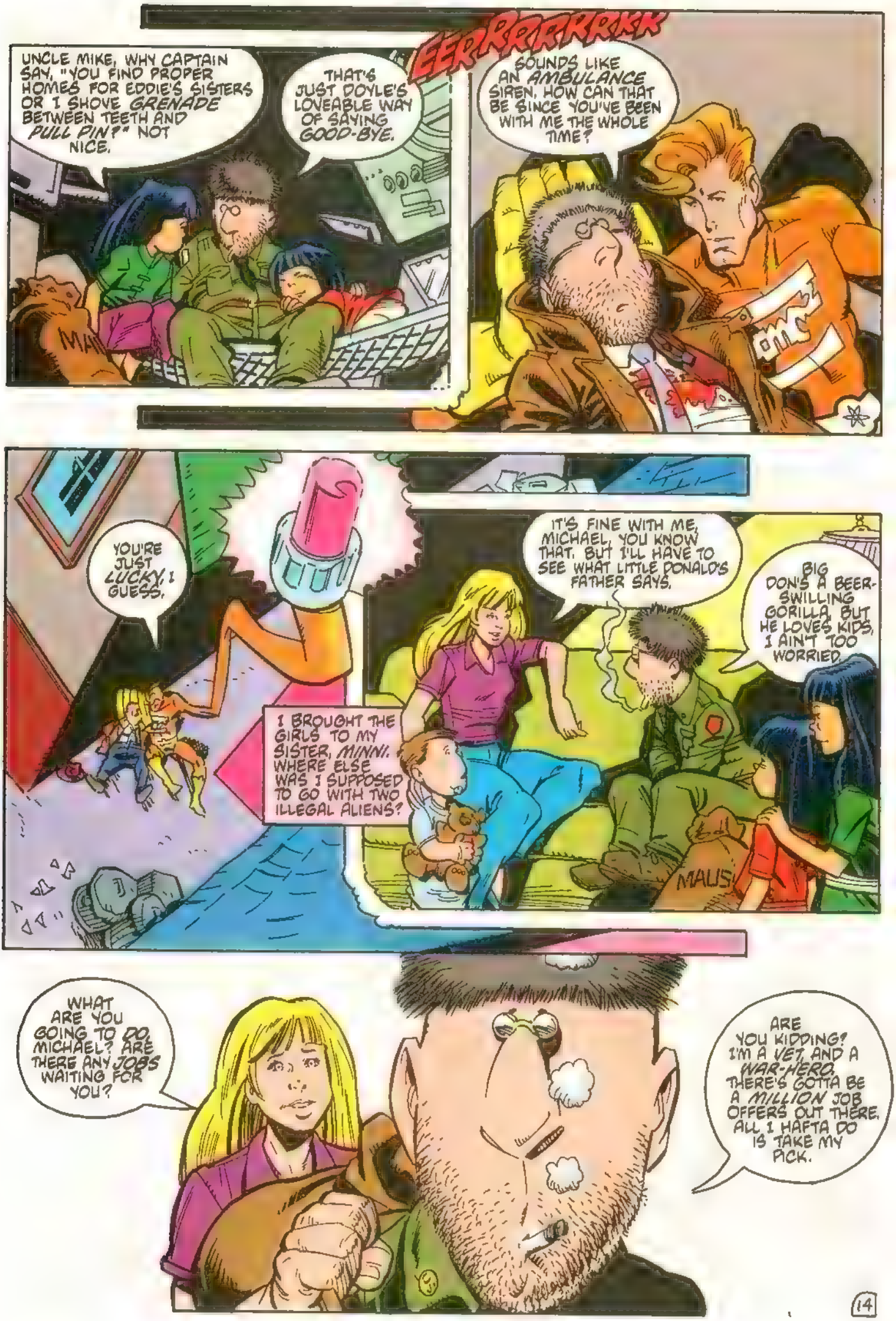
RED MADE KIA* ON THUNDER ROAD**, I HAVEN'T SEEN ANY OF THE OTHERS.
...KILLED ANYONE? NAW. IT'S PRETTY QUIET.
YOU... UH... SEEN MUCH ACTION? YOU KNOW ...UH...
FUZIE
*KILLED IN ACTION
** HIGHWAY 13-MIKE.
HIT IT! INCOMING!
KWISH!
KWISH!
THE SOFTENING UP ROCKET ATTACK LASTED ABOUT FIVE MINUTES. THEN CAME THE FIRST WAVE.
KA-BOOM!
KA-BLAM!
WE'RE OUT IN THE OPEN, MIKIE! RUN FOR THE BUNKERS! I'LL COVER YOU!
OKAY, THEN I'LL COVER YOU.
KA-POW!
KA-POW!
HOOO-JEEZE!
BRATATATATAT
9

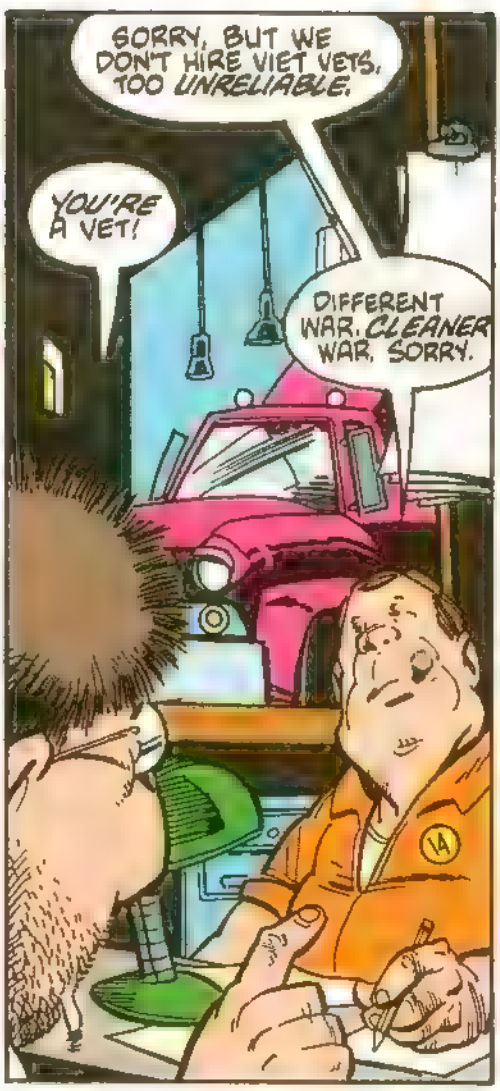
GET AWAY FROM ME, MIKIE! YOU CAN'T PULL THIS DOG OFF OF ME!
DUKIE!
KA-BLADA BOOM!
SOMETHING IN MY BRAIN SNAPPED WHEN I SAW DUKIE EXPLODE. I DON'T REMEMBER A THING AFTER THAT... UNTIL--
IT'S OVER, MIKE. YOU CAN STOP PULLING THE TRIGGERS. NO ONE CAN HURT YOU ANY MORE.
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
THEY CALLED US SURVIVORS. I WONDERED IF WE HAD REALLY SURVIVED OR IF WE LEFT OUR BEST PARTS BACK AT THE SAND CASTLE.
THAT CRAZY MAUSER HE VOLUNTEERED TO BE POINT MAN.

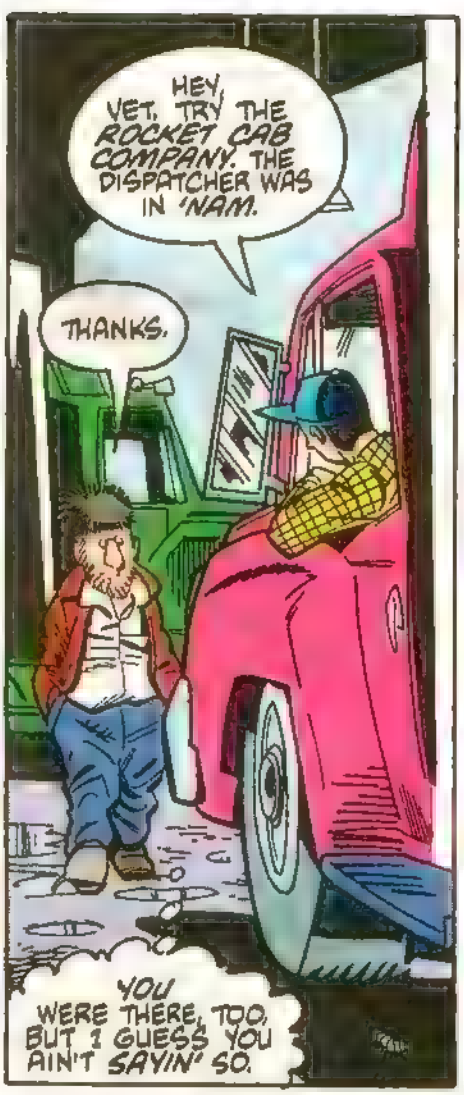
I SEWED ON MY FIRST STRIPE AT BANDIT HILL, MY SECOND ON A JUNGLE PATH BETWEEN FIRE BASE JULIE AND AN LOC, AND MY THIRD NEAR TAY NINH.
DURING AN RIF* PATROL, WE STOPPED AT A TINY VILLE EAST OF DI AN. IT WAS EDDIE'S VILLE.
YOU COME INSIDE. MY SISTERS FIX YOU TOP GRADE MEAL.
SET UP THE CLAYMORE MINES ON THAT TRAIL, AND WARN THE VILLAGERS TO USE ANOTHER ONE.
*RECONNAISSANCE IN FORCE, ALSO SEARCH AN DESTROY-- MIKE.
THIS IS HUYNH THI PHUONG, AND THE LITTLE ONE--
US
NO, NO. USE G.I. NAMES. I RUTHIE, LITTLE ONE ANGELA.

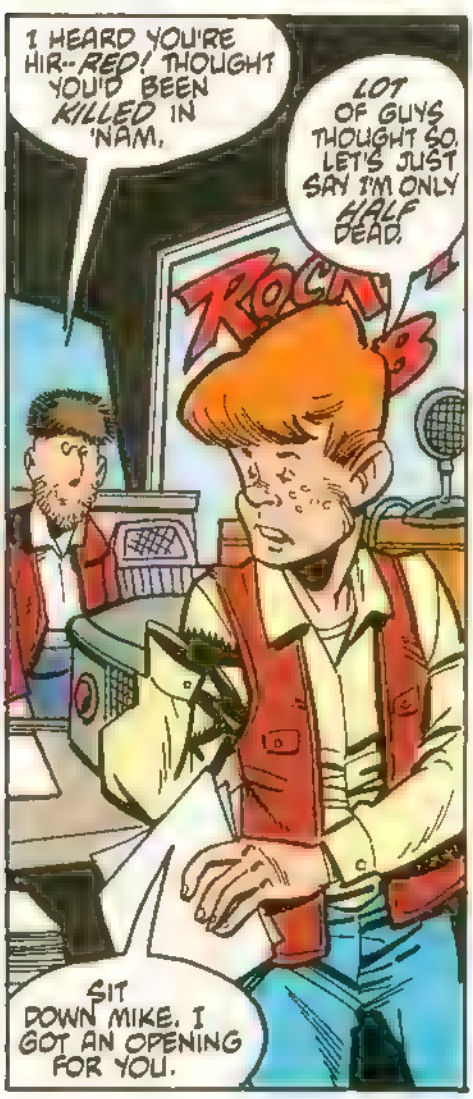
SISTERS NICE GIRLS, RIGHT? I ASK FAVOR FROM A-NUMBER ONE G.I. YOU TAKE SISTERS HOME TO USA WHEN YOU GO. I GIVE YOU BEAU COUP* BUCKS.
NO WAY, EDDIE, WHEN MY DEROS** IS UP, I'M HEADIN BACK TO THE WORLD*** ...ALONE!
* FRENCH WORD FOR A LOT.
** DATE ELIGIBLE FOR RETURN FROM OVERSEAS.
*** HOME-- MIKE.
SARGE! WE GOT CHARLIES COMING!
DAMN! THERE'S A ROUND STUCK IN MY CHAMBER, AND I CAN'T JOG IT LOOSE!
CLIK!
KA-BLAM!
12

DON'T WORRY, MIKE. I FIX YOU, WON'T DIE. YOU HAVE MILLION DOLLAR WOUND GO HOME NOW.
YEAH, AND I FEEL LIKE A MILLION... :cough:
A WEEK LATER, EDDIE'S PREDICTION CAME TRUE.
MAUSER-- WAIT UP! WANT TO SAY GOOD-BYE!
DOYLE! RATS! HE'S THE LAST GUY I WANT TO SEE NOW.
YOU DID AN EXCEPTIONAL JOB, MIKE, AND I... JEEZ-US! STILL THE SAME SLIME-BUCKET! STILL THE SAME LOW-DOWN SCHEMING--
HOLD ON, CAPTAIN.
I PUT MY LIFE ON THE LINE FOR MY COUNTRY TOO MANY TIMES TO GO BACK TO WHAT I WAS. FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, I WAS A GOOD SOLDIER, AND I'LL BE A LAW-ABIDING CITIZEN...
...BUT EVEN THE LAW CAN BE COMPASSIONATE --FOR THE RIGHT REASON.
13


UNCLE MIKE, WHY CAPTAIN SAY, "YOU FIND PROPER HOMES FOR EDDIE'S SISTERS OR I SHOVE GRENADE BETWEEN TEETH AND PULL PIN?" NOT NICE.
THAT'S JUST DOYLE'S LOVEABLE WAY OF SAYING GOOD-BYE.
EERRRRRRRKK
SOUNDS LIKE AN AMBULANCE SIREN. HOW CAN THAT BE SINCE YOU'VE BEEN WITH ME THE WHOLE TIME?
YOU'RE JUST LUCKY, I GUESS.
I BROUGHT THE GIRLS TO MY SISTER, MINNI. WHERE ELSE WAS I SUPPOSED TO GO WITH TWO ILLEGAL ALIENS?
IT'S FINE WITH ME, MICHAEL, YOU KNOW THAT. BUT I'LL HAVE TO SEE WHAT LITTLE DONALD'S FATHER SAYS.
BIG DON'S A BEER-SWILLING GORILLA, BUT HE LOVES KIDS, I AIN'T TOO WORRIED.
MAUS
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, MICHAEL? ARE THERE ANY JOBS WAITING FOR YOU?
ARE YOU KIDDING? I'M A VET, AND A WAR-HERO. THERE'S GOTTA BE A MILLION JOB OFFERS OUT THERE. ALL I HAFTA DO IS TAKE MY PICK.


SORRY, BUT WE DON'T HIRE VIET VETS, TOO UNRELIABLE.
YOU'RE A VET!
DIFFERENT WAR. CLEANER WAR. SORRY.


HEY, VET. TRY THE ROCKET CAB COMPANY. THE DISPATCHER WAS IN 'NAM.
THANKS.
YOU WERE THERE, TOO, BUT I GUESS YOU AIN'T SAYIN' SO.


I HEARD YOU'RE HIR--RED! THOUGHT YOU'D BEEN KILLED IN 'NAM.
LOT OF GUYS THOUGHT SO. LET'S JUST SAY I'M ONLY HALF DEAD.
ROCK
SIT DOWN MIKE. I GOT AN OPENING FOR YOU.

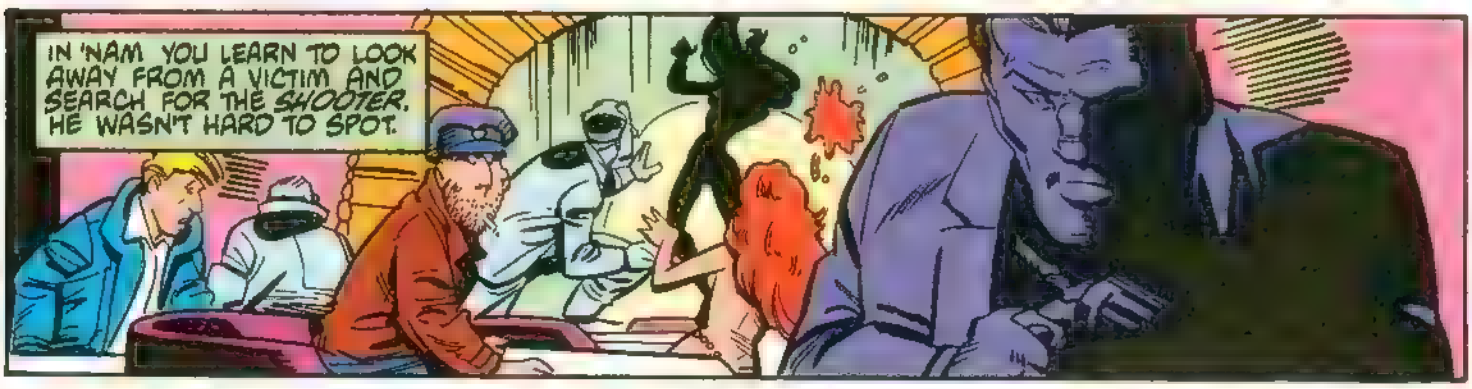
SO, FOR A FEW YEARS, I HACKED AROUND. THEN ONE NIGHT...
ON CALL

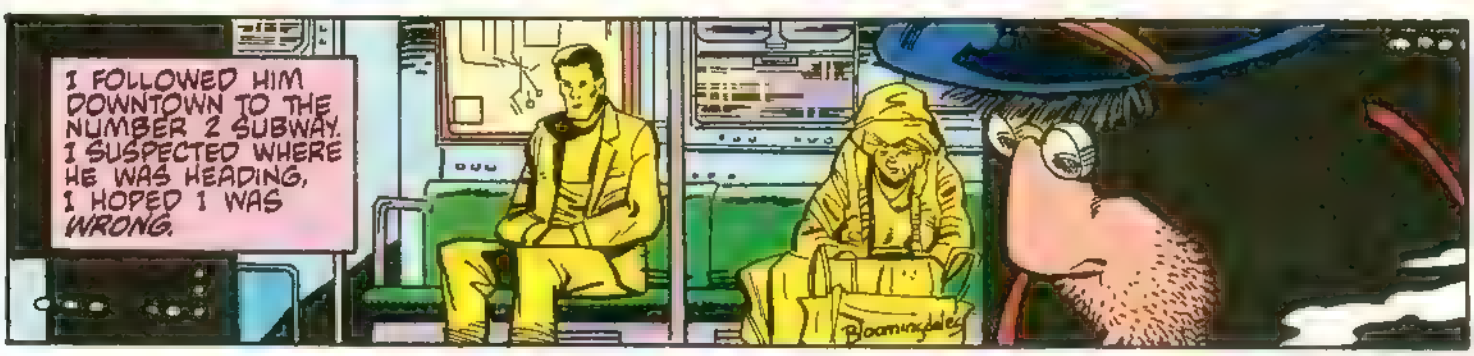
DON'T PUT THE FLAG DOWN. WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
UH-OH. HERE COMES MY THIRD HOLD-UP.

CAPTAIN DOYLE! OR SHOULD I SAY, MISTER DOYLE?
SERGEANT DOYLE. I'M ON THE FORCE, MIKE. AND, OF COURSE, THIS MEETING IS NO COINCIDENCE.
I'M ON THE TRAIL OF A DOPE SMUGGLER- A RUTHLESS KILLER WITH STRONG CONNECTIONS FROM HERE TO 'NAM. HE'S RUINED A LOT OF KIDS, AND OUT-AND-OUT MURDERED A LOT OF OTHERS. AND I CAN'T GET A TAG ON HIM. BUT YOU CAN.
ME?! WHY ME?!
TAXI
IT'S EDDIE!
YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR HEAD. EDDIE WAS A SWEET KID. HE SAVED MY LIFE IN 'NAM.
HE'S HERE AND HE'S CHANGED.. OR PROVE ME WRONG. BUT FIND HIM FOR ME.
DOYLE WAS BETTING THAT EDDIE HAD KEPT IN TOUCH WITH HIS SISTERS AFTER HE ENTERED THE STATES. THEY WOULDN'T TALK TO HIM BECAUSE HE WAS A COP, BUT HE HOPED THEY MIGHT OPEN UP FOR UNCLE MIKE.
VIDEO
STRIP
PEEK
RUTHIE HAD LEFT MY SISTER'S HOME WHEN SHE TURNED EIGHTEEN. I FOUND OUT WHERE SHE WAS WORKING BUT I KEPT QUIET TO SAVE HER FACE.

'COURSE, RUTHIE WAS SHOWING OFF A LOT MORE THAN HER FACE AT THE CLUB.
YOU COME WITH ME. WE HAVE LOT OF FUN.
I CAN'T LEAVE THE CLUB. PLEASE GO AWAY.
HI, RUTHIE.
UNCLE MIKE! HOW'D YOU FIND ME?
"UNCLE?"
YOU CAN'T HIDE WHEN YOU'RE ALL LIT UP.
THAT'S WHAT EDDIE SAID.
YOU'VE SEEN EDDIE? I WANT TO TALK TO HIM.
HE'S WORKING DOWN BY THE DOCKS, BUT DON'T TELL ANYONE. I THINK HE'S IN SOME KIND OF TROUBLE WITH THE LAW, BECAUSE THAT CAPTAIN DOYLE FROM 'NAM WAS ASKING ABOUT HIM AND HE'S A COP.
GOTTA GO ON NOW. WAIT FOR ME?
SURE.
SHE WAS ALL GROWN UP, BUT I KEPT SEEING THAT LOVELY KID IN 'NAM. I PROMISED MYSELF TO HELP HER GET A BETTER START. I OWED HER THAT MUCH.

BUT I WAS NEVER GOING TO GET THE CHANCE.


IN 'NAM YOU LEARN TO LOOK AWAY FROM A VICTIM AND SEARCH FOR THE SHOOTER. HE WASN'T HARD TO SPOT.

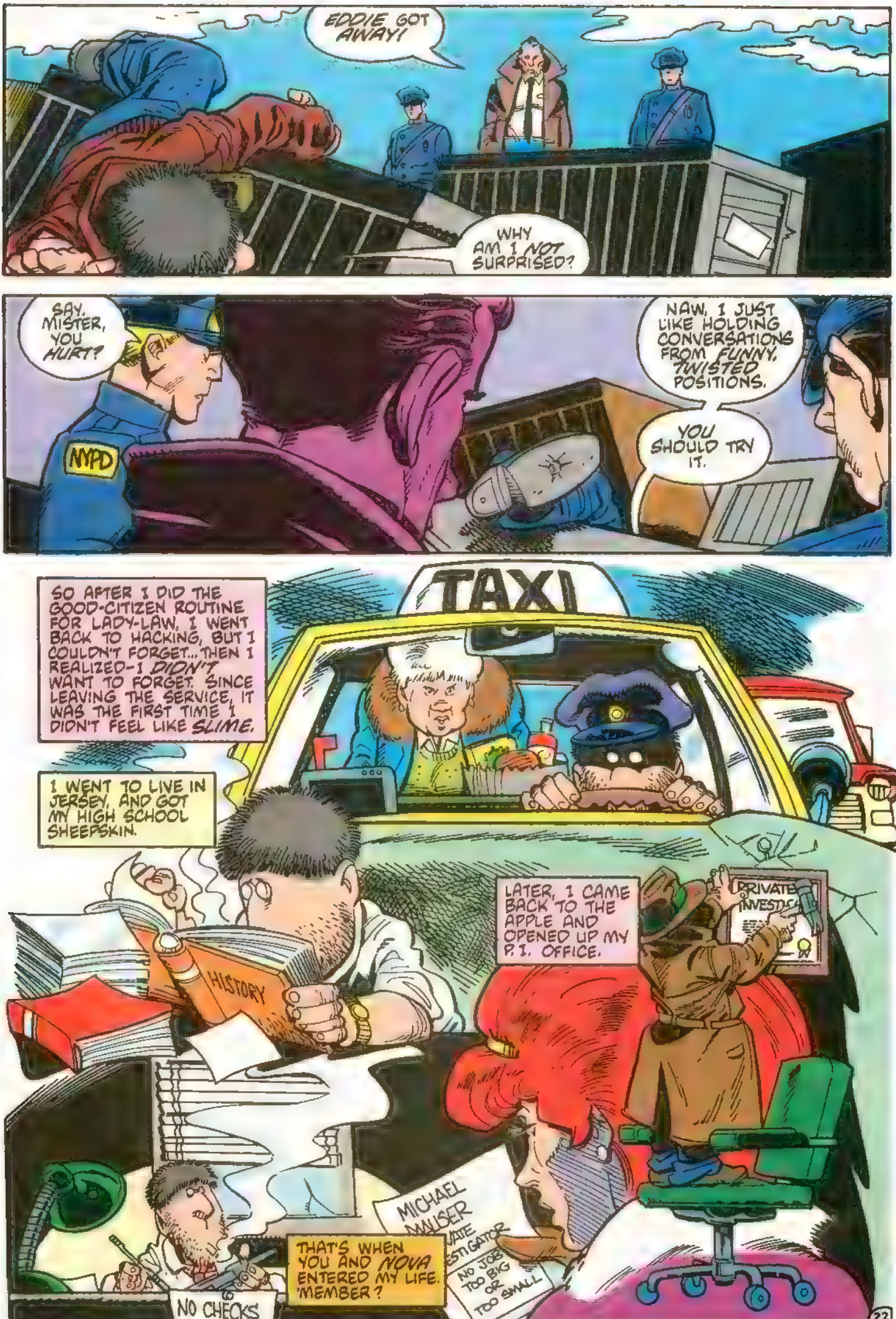

I FOLLOWED HIM DOWNTOWN TO THE NUMBER 2 SUBWAY. I SUSPECTED WHERE HE WAS HEADING, I HOPED I WAS WRONG.

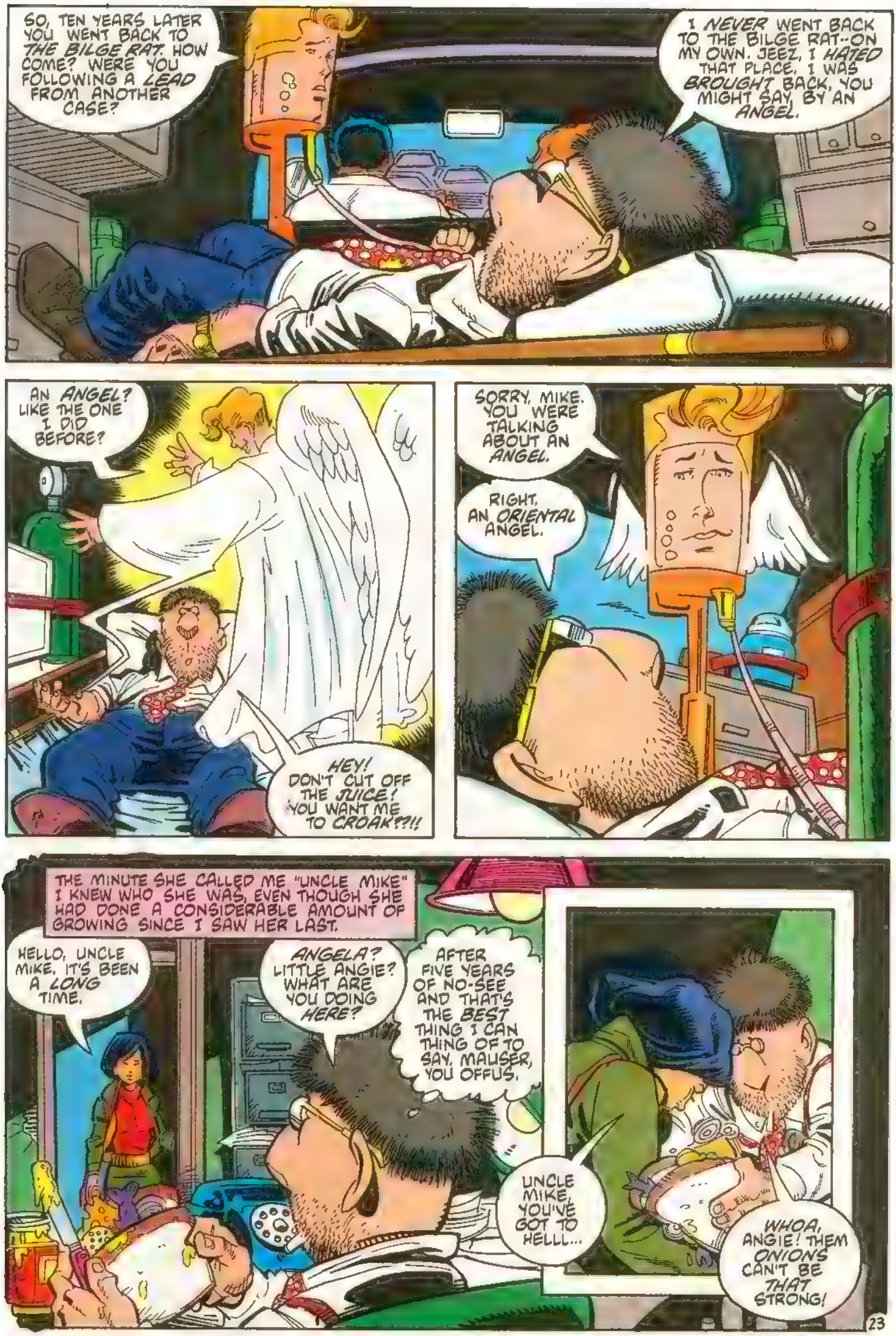
EDDIE!

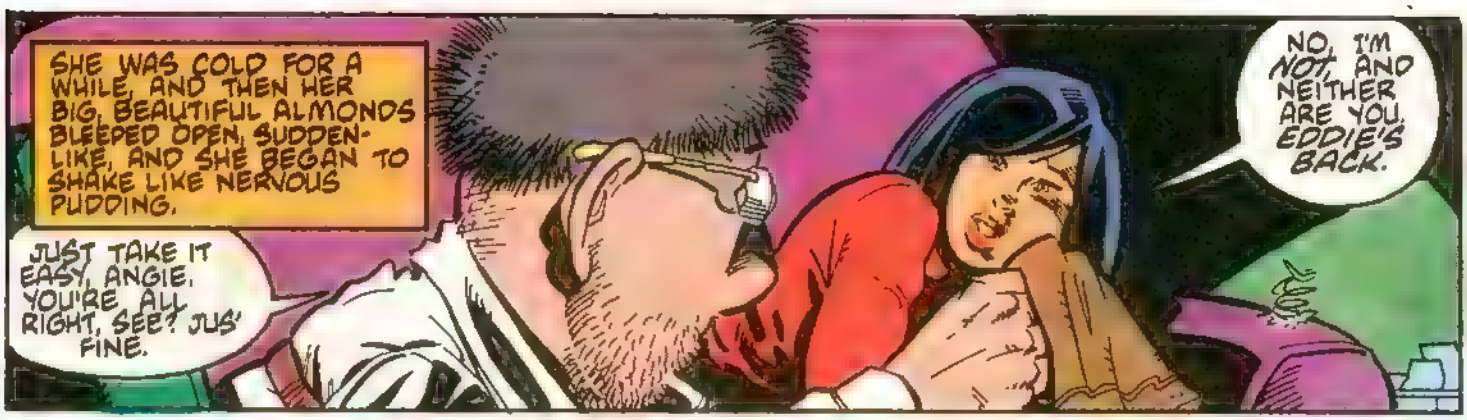
THINGS HAPPENED SO FAST I NEVER HAD TIME TO CRY FOR RUTHIE.
SHE WAS A GOOD KID. SHE WOULD HAVE MADE IT WITH A LITTLE HELP. NOW I GOT TO MAKE SURE THAT EDDIE DOESN'T EVER MAKE IT. AND THAT WAS GOING TO TAKE AN EDGE.
SOUNDS LIKE A MOTORBOAT. DANGEROUS FOR A SMALL BOAT TO BE OUT SO LATE AT NIGHT.
BRRRRRRRR!
HEADING RIGHT FOR ME, GOOD.

WELCOME TO THE USA, EDDIE.
MIKE! WHEN KY DESCRIBED THE MAN RUTHIE WAS TALKING TO--HER "UNCLE"--I THOUGHT IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN YOU.
SORRY ABOUT THE FRISK, MIKE, BUT IN THIS BUSINESS YOU CAN'T TRUST ANYONE.
YOU MEAN LIKE...RUTHIE. SHE WAS TOO INNOCENT NOT TO TRUST YOU.
THAT BROKE MY HEART, MIKE, BUT I HAD NO CHOICE. I WAS ORDERED TO WASTE HER. THE POLICE WERE ASKING HER TOO MANY QUESTIONS, AND SHE KNEW... TOO MUCH. IT'S A TOUGH BUSINESS.
IT'S A MONEY-MAKING BUSINESS FOR SMART PEOPLE WHO LEARN FAST. I LEARNED VERY FAST. FROM HUMBLE CHIEU HOI'S BOY TO SHARP NEW YORK IMPORTER IN FIVE YEARS. THERE'S A PLACE FOR YOU, MIKE. WANT IT?
CAN I THINK ON IT?
THAT WAS THE WRONG ANSWER, MIKE, AND, UNFORTUNATELY, YOU DON'T GET THREE TRIES.
TAKE HIM OUTSIDE.

I ALMOST SAID: "COULD YOU GUYS HOLD UP A SEC WHILST I RETRIEVE THE .45 I CLEVERLY TAPED UNDER THE TABLE?" FUNNY, THE THINGS THAT RUN THROUGH YOUR MIND AT A TIME LIKE THAT.
SO MUCH FOR MY "EDGE."
THEY DON'T REALIZE IT, BUT I'M LEADING THEM. NOW, IF THEY JUST STAY STUPID UNTIL WE GET NEAR THE WATER...
YOU SLOW DOWN, NO NEED HURRY... TO DEATH.
BILGE
OUR FIS DON'T SMELL
WHEN I REACHED THE TRIP-WIRE I MADE MY BREAK. I HAD TO PUT DISTANCE BETWEEN ME AND...
FOOLISH MAN! YOU CANNOT OUTRUN US!
KA-POW! KA-POW!
AIN'T TRYIN' TO OUTRUN YOU. I JUST WANT TO PUT LOTS OF SPACE BETWEEN ME AND...
"...THE EXPLOSION!
BADA-BAVA-BOOM!


EDDIE GOT AWAY!
WHY AM I NOT SURPRISED?
SAY, MISTER, YOU HURT?
NYPD
NAW, I JUST LIKE HOLDING CONVERSATIONS FROM FUNNY, TWISTED POSITIONS.
YOU SHOULD TRY IT.
SO AFTER I DID THE GOOD-CITIZEN ROUTINE FOR LADY-LAW, I WENT BACK TO HACKING, BUT I COULDN'T FORGET... THEN I REALIZED-I DIDN'T WANT TO FORGET. SINCE LEAVING THE SERVICE, IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE SLIME.
TAXI
I WENT TO LIVE IN JERSEY, AND GOT MY HIGH SCHOOL SHEEPSKIN.
HISTORY
LATER, I CAME BACK TO THE APPLE AND OPENED UP MY P.I. OFFICE.
PRIVATE INVESTIGA
MICHAEL MAUSER
PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR
NO JOB TOO BIG OR TOO SMALL
NO CHECKS
THAT'S WHEN YOU AND NOVA ENTERED MY LIFE. 'MEMBER?
22

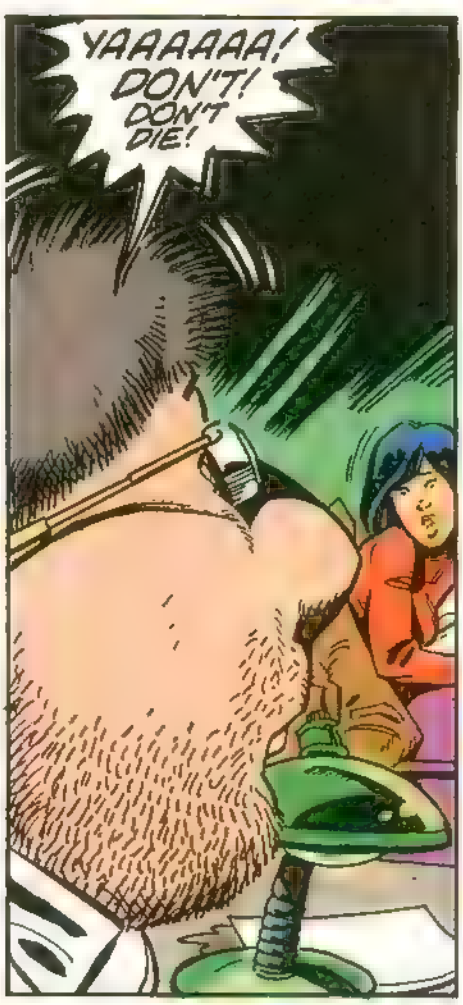

SO, TEN YEARS LATER YOU WENT BACK TO THE BILGE RAT. HOW COME? WERE YOU FOLLOWING A LEAD FROM ANOTHER CASE?
I NEVER WENT BACK TO THE BILGE RAT--ON MY OWN. JEEZ, I HATED THAT PLACE. I WAS BROUGHT BACK, YOU MIGHT SAY, BY AN ANGEL.
AN ANGEL? LIKE THE ONE I DID BEFORE?
HEY! DON'T CUT OFF THE JUICE! YOU WANT ME TO CROAK??!!
SORRY, MIKE. YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT AN ANGEL.
RIGHT. AN ORIENTAL ANGEL.
THE MINUTE SHE CALLED ME "UNCLE MIKE" I KNEW WHO SHE WAS, EVEN THOUGH SHE HAD DONE A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF GROWING SINCE I SAW HER LAST.
HELLO, UNCLE MIKE. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.
ANGELA? LITTLE ANGIE? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
AFTER FIVE YEARS OF NO-SEE AND THAT'S THE BEST THING I CAN THING OF TO SAY, MAUSER, YOU OFFUS.
UNCLE MIKE, YOU'VE GOT TO HELLL...
WHOA, ANGIE! THEM ONIONS CAN'T BE THAT STRONG!


SHE WAS COLD FOR A WHILE, AND THEN HER BIG, BEAUTIFUL ALMONDS BLEEPED OPEN, SUDDEN-LIKE, AND SHE BEGAN TO SHAKE LIKE NERVOUS PUDDING.
JUST TAKE IT EASY, ANGIE. YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, SEE? JUS' FINE.
NO, I'M *NOT*, AND NEITHER ARE YOU. EDDIE'S BACK.

A NEW BATCH OF "DIRTY" SNOW WAS BEING PIPED INTO THE CITY, BUT NOBODY KNEW WHO THE SUPPLIER WAS. *NOW* I KNEW.
BECAUSE I CAME HERE TO WARN YOU, I HAVE SIGNED MY OWN *DEATH WARRANT*. BUT I COULDN'T LET EDDIE HURT YOU. YOU GAVE US SO MUCH, UNCLE MIKE.
I DON'T THINK *RUTHIE* FELT THAT WAY.

CAN I STAY HERE WITH YOU TONIGHT, UNCLE MIKE? I'M FRIGHTENED.
SURE, HONEY. USE THE COUCH. I WON'T BE DOING MUCH SNOOZ-ING. GOT TOO MUCH TO THINK ABOUT.

ZZZZZZ


YAAAAAA! DON'T! DON'T DIE!

I'M OKAY. JUST A LOUSY *NIGHTMARE*. GO BACK TO SLEEP.
WERE YOU DREAMING ABOUT VIETNAM? I ALSO HAVE NIGHTMARES ABOUT THE...BOMBINGS. IT HELPS IF YOU TALK ABOUT IT. DO YOU WANT TO-?
NO.

WE HAD BREAKFAST AT MY FAVORITE JOINT, RECOMMENDED BY EVERY COCKROACH IN THE TRI-STATE AREA. WE WERE QUIET FOR A WHILE. AWKWARD QUIET. THEN WE TALKED.
I STILL HAVE SOME OF THE DOLLS YOU BOUGHT ME WHEN YOU USED TO COME TO VISIT. THEY'RE BACK AT MY APARTMENT. REMEMBER THE BALLERINA BUNNY-- TOSHA? I STILL HAVE HER.
CROISSANT
WHY DID YOU STOP COMING TO VISIT?
'CAUSE YOU WERE GETTING TOO BIG FOR DOLLS.
YOU CAN'T GO BACK TO YOUR APARTMENT. I'M TAKING YOU TO A FRIEND'S PLACE.
OKAY.
METS
WHAT YOU MEANT IN THE DINER IS THAT I WAS TURNING INTO A WOMAN, AND THAT WAS SCARING YOU. ARE YOU AFRAID OF WOMEN, UNCLE MIKE, IS THAT WHY YOU NEVER MARRIED?
I'M A ROTTEN PROVIDER. I GOT A DANGEROUS JOB, AND I GOT ALL THE GOOD LOOKS OF QUASIMODO. YOU FIND ME A SKIRT WHO WANTS A LUG LIKE THAT, AND I'LL THINK ABOUT MARRIAGE.
START THINKING, UNCLE MIKE.
RED AND I HAD REMAINED IN TOUCH OVER THE YEARS, AND I KNEW HE AND HIS WIFE WOULDN'T MIND PUTTING ANGIE UP FOR A FEW DAYS.
I REALLY APPRECIATE THIS, RED.
NO SWEAT, MIKE. IT WILL BE A TREAT HAVING A NON-REDHEAD IN THE HOUSE FOR A WHILE.
25

WORKING WITH BILL DOYLE, WE GATHERED QUITE A BIT OF EVIDENCE AGAINST EDDIE, ENOUGH TO PUT HIM AWAY FOR LIFE...IF WE COULD ONLY LOCATE THE B7O*!
ANGIE WOULD LOVE THAT. IT'D GO WITH TOSHA. AH, SHE'D THINK IT WAS "CORNY." NO, SHE WOULDN'T, SHE'D... NAW!
fao shwartz
*BIG TIME OPERATOR-
THERE'S ONLY TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE WHO LEAVE DOORS AJAR IN THE APPLE-THE STUPID AND THE CROOKED, RED WAS NEITHER!
WHAHAPPEN?!
MIKE? THAT YOU? THEY TOOK HER, I TRIED TO STOP THEM... BUT THEY TOOK HER ANYWAY. SAID YOU'D KNOW WHERE. SAID THEY'D BE WAITING FOR YOU. THEY SAID NO COPS OR IT WAS FISH TIME.
YOU KNOW WHERE THEY'RE HOLDING HER?
YEAH.
EDDIE! YOU BLOOD-SUCKING LEECH! YOU BUCKET OF...

...SH--!
NOW I KNOW WHAT TARZAN FELT LIKE...BEING SURROUNDED BY APES.
HELLO, MIKE.
I HATE THIS. I REALLY DO. AND IF IT WEREN'T FOR BUSINESS, I'D LET BYGONES-BE-BYGONES AND FORGET THE WHOLE THING. BUT YOU KNOW TOO MUCH ABOUT MY BUSINESS... JUST LIKE RUTHIE.
WHERE'S ANGIE?!!
ANGIE'S OUT LOOKING AT THE STARS. UNFORTUNATELY FOR HER, THEY'RE... STARFISH!
YOU WERE FOOLISH TO COME HERE IN A FUROR. YOU LOST YOUR TEMPER, AND THAT MEANS YOU LOST YOUR EDGE.
WHY EDDIE? YOU WERE SUCH A TERRIFIC KID IN 'NAM.
I WAS ALWAYS AN OPERATOR, MIKE, AND I WAS ALWAYS GOOD. UNCLE SAM GAVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME...THE BEST!
I KNEW THAT I COULD ONLY BUY A COUPLE OF SECONDS. BUT FROM WHERE I WAS STANDING, A FEW SECONDS SEEMED LIKE A MIGHTY LONG TIME.
POW!
BLAM!
WHAM!
UNGH!

YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING! IT'S STILL HERE!
KA-POW! KA-POW! KA-POW!
DOYLE SAID THE MAN IN THE ALLEY WAS EDDIE. YOU FINALLY GOT HIM.
BUT NOT BEFORE HE KILLED ANGIE. I DIDN'T THINK EVEN A HARD CASE LIKE HIM WOULD ICE HIS OWN SISTER FOR NOTHING.
HE DIDN'T, MIKE. SHE WAS LOCKED IN THE BILGE RAT'S KITCHEN FREEZER.
HI, UNC-- HI, MIKE.
NO MORE BAD DREAMS, MIKE. IT'S ALL GOING TO BE ROSES FROM HERE ON.
BAD DREAMS. SHE PROBABLY THOUGHT MY NIGHTMARE THAT NIGHT IN MY OFFICE WAS ABOUT 'NAM.
IT WASN'T.
I WAS SCREAMING FOR MY DAD. HE NEVER KNEW ABOUT THE EDGE A GUY NEEDS TO KEEP LIVING. WISH I COULD OF TOLD HIM.